THE CAPITALS

OF

THE BANKER SCREEN

IN THE

FIRST REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH,

SCHENECTADY,

N. Y.

DESIGNED BY

EDWARD T. POTTER,

ARCHITECT OF THE CHURCH.

NEW YORK:
PHOTOGRAPHED BY GEO. G. ROCKWOOD,
No. 839 BROADWAY.
1864.

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TO THE

Rev. Henry J. Morton. D. D.,

Rector of St. James' Church, Philadelphia,

THIS VOLUME

IS RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY

DEDICATED.

Introduction by
Prof. Gillespie of Union College

THE Publisher of these Photographs having requested me to preface them with a brief description, to do so gives me special pleasure, as my daily opportunities of watching the progress of the beautiful edifice which now adorns "The ancient city of Dorp," in connection with previous architectural studies, had enabled me to appreciate how much thought, feeling, and devotion had been infused by the architect into every portion of the structure of which this series of Capitals forms one of the gems.

They surmount the columns of a SCREEN, which at once divides and unites the Church and the Consistory room, which last opens out from the main structure at right angles to it, so that both can, at will, be thrown into a single audience room. The Screen is formed of plate glass, framed by black walnut columns, arches, and tracery, and fills

up the entire opening into the Consistory room from floor to roof. It is thirty feet wide and over forty high. The vista looking through it to the stained glass windows, whose colors and figures the sun paints over again upon the floor, adds greatly to the harmonious effect of the Church itself.

There are three archways, surmounted by crocketed gables, and having the spandrels filled with tracery. Above these are a series of cusped lancet arches, leading up to the roof-truss, whose arch spans the whole. The columns which support the gabled arches are those whose capitals (remarkably well carved in black walnut) are here given.

In designing them (as well as the other details of the edifice), none of the religious symbols familiar to the Episcopal and Roman churches could be used; being expressly forbidden by the canons of the Synod of Dort. This compelled the architect to resort to his own imagination, and these are some of the results.

The number of the capitals, twelve, suggested the months of the year, and their cycle is typified in the carvings, though these correspond only generally, and not precisely, to the successive lunations. The abacus above each bears the appropriate zodiacal sign.

The First Capital, which might emblem the first month of the year, shows branches covered with icicles; all life being suspended and dormant, if indeed existent.

But in the *Second*, the icicles have gone, though the branches are still bare. But there is hope.

The hope is justified. In the *Third*, the leaf-buds are swelling, and a bird is seen—a harbinger of spring.

The *Fourth* shows us the branches in half leaf, and *two* birds. "Coming events cast their shadows before."

In the *Fifth*, the leaves are fully developed; the birds feel that May has come, and they have chosen each other for mates.

June shows itself in the *Sixth;* flowers appear and the birds are constructing their nests.

We next see, in the *Seventh*, the forming fruit; and the now matron bird is sitting on her precious eggs, and being fed by her attentive consort.

In the *Eighth*, the old birds are bringing food to their eager young.

In the *Ninth*, the mother is urging the last fledgling to leave the nest.

Then we see, in the *Tenth*, ripe fruit, and the now full-grown birds feeding upon it.

November comes, and the birds are winging their way southward.

Finally, the *Twelfth* capital shows us the summer over; the birds gone; the fruits fallen; the foliage sere; and the hemlock with its pendent cones adorning the brow of December.

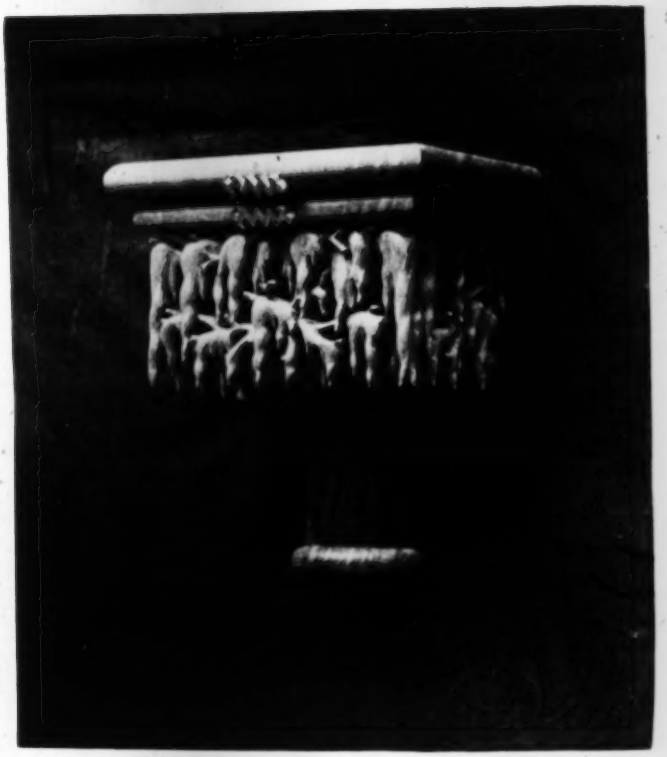
The whole Series constitutes a charming little poem of twelve stanzas.

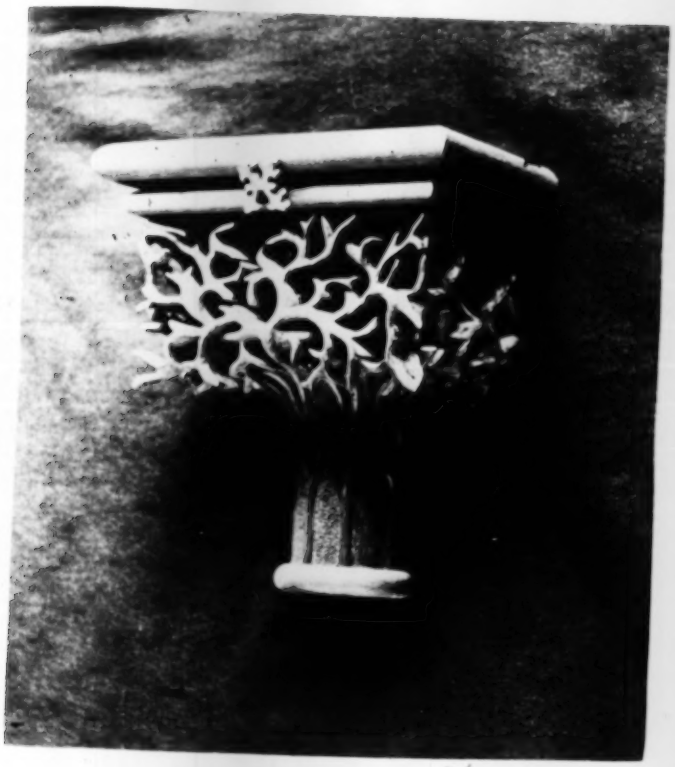
The Screen was a gift to the Church by Gershom Banker, Esq., now of New York, but a native of Schenectady. The painted windows and other decorations of the Church were given by various members of the congregation, as memorials of departed relatives. Mr. Banker selected this screen (which has cost about two thousand dollars) as a memorial of his mother, Hester Van Voast Banker, born 1792, died 1832.

Perhaps, unconsciously to himself, the imagination of the architect became interfused with associations of the maternal and filial relations, and this may have influenced the design. And so too the cycle of the months might have been conceived as indicating that throughout the circle of the year, the memory of the mother was present with her son.

W. M. G.

Union College, Schenectady, *Jan.*, 1864.





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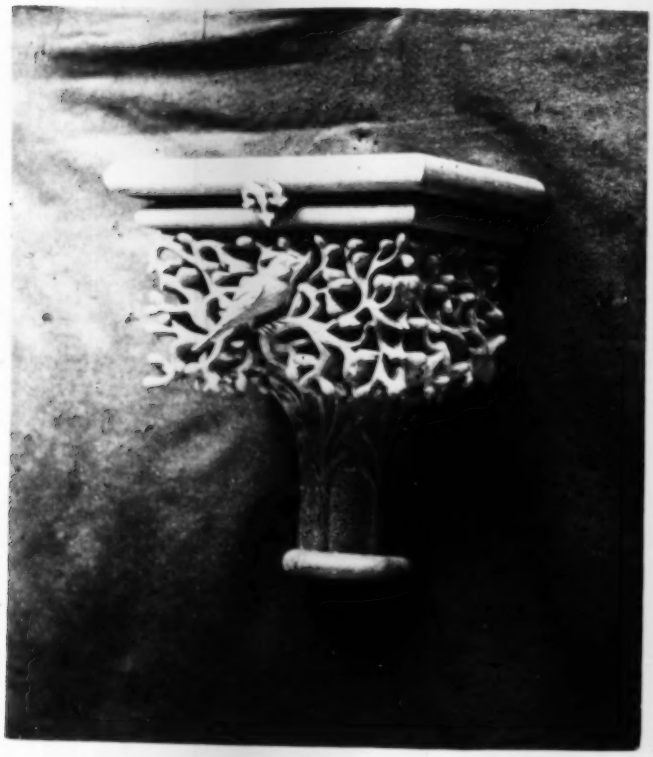

October